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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CUBAN POLITICAL TRENDS

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SUMMARY

The Cuban presidential elections scheduled for 1 June 1948 can have an adverse effect on US security interests because (a) they will influence the attitude of the Cuban Government toward fundamental US strategic interests, possibly with results comparable to those produced by the rejection of the Panama base-sites agreement by the government of that country, and (b) they will determine the degree of favor or disfavor with which the future Cuban Government will regard basic US policies and objectives to be presented and implemented at future international conferences. Neither the Communists nor the proponents of extreme nationalism *(Cubanidad)* are likely to achieve, as a result of the elections, either a majority of votes or a significant numerical increase in popular strength. Political events in Cuba, however, make it apparent that both pre- and post-election cabals among the various contending groups and parties can permit the Communists and/or the *Cubanidad* nationalists to obtain a disproportionate and pervasive influence over Cuban affairs. The influence of the former would be exercised in the familiar directions; the ideologies and programs of the latter would at once be translated into official government campaigns against US "economic aggression" and into noisy apprehension regarding the US concept of hemisphere defense and military cooperation. Strength of major groups, and possibilities from Communist or *Cubanidad* combinations, are analyzed in the body of this estimate.

Note: The information in this report is as of 15 March 1948.

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in the report; the Intelligence Division, Department of the Army, had no comment; the dissent of the Intelligence Organization, Department of State, is published herewith as Enclosure "A".

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Political events in Cuba, like those in other countries situated within the area of unquestioned US predominance — the Caribbean and the northern part of South America — usually do not assume the white or black, pro-US or anti-US coloration which is possible in countries remote from the area of US predominance or even on the margin of that area. It is, for example, almost inconceivable that one of the Caribbean countries should make an open anti-US alliance with an unfriendly power. The question important for US security is not whether such-and-such a country will be a constant friend or a declared enemy — neither of which is likely to occur — but whether cooperation will run relatively smoothly or be sabotaged by a series of acts or group of circumstances each relatively unimportant in itself. A case in point is Panama's rejection of the base-sites agreement, certainly not to be attributed solely to the personal views of Alfaro and Harmodio Arias, or to Panamanian resentment of long-continued military restrictions, or to the approaching elections that demanded a nationalistic position from a would-be-successful candidate, or, least of all, to any deep-seated hostility to the US and desire to shirk defense responsibilities. On the contrary, it was the impact — both individually and in combination — of these and other factors on a normally friendly majority that produced at least temporarily damaging effect on US security interests. Similarly, in Cuba the degree with which the US will encounter either willing cooperation or stubborn recalcitrance in any given situation will be frequently determined by the influence which the numerically small anti-US groups are able to exercise through alliance with other, intrinsically more important forces. For this reason, the Cuban elections must be examined with a view to discovering the individual group and party strengths, and the likelihood of interparty alignments and "deals," if the impact of the anti-US forces in Cuban national policy is to be appreciated.

1. COMMUNIST STRENGTH.

Communist strength in Cuba is reflected in two organizations closely connected with one another: the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC recently divided into Communist and non-Communist factions) and the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), which is the Communist party of Cuba.

a. Confederation of Cuban Workers.

Communist control of the CTC had its origins in the history of Cuban organized labor. The first truly national federation of labor unions in Cuba was the National Confederation of Cuban Workers (CNOC), organized in 1925, which had, as one of its principal organizers, Julio Antonio Mella, secretary of the Communist Party. President Machado rigidly repressed the CNOC, martyrized Mella by having him assassinated, and established a rival Cuban Federation of Labor with AFL affiliations. The AFL was considered anti-negro in Cuba and this fact gave additional support to the CNOC, which managed to operate illicitly.

Social upheaval that accompanied the downfall of Machado permitted the CNOC, under Communist domination, to emerge from underground with enhanced pres-

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tige and power, and its influence persisted until 1935 when Batista, the real power in Cuba, dissolved it and jailed many of its leaders. In 1939, however, Batista renounced his anti-Communist, anti-labor stand and permitted the formation of a new labor confederation, the CTC, under the leadership of the negro Communist, Lázaro Peña. This organization included many original CNOC leaders.

Meanwhile a split had developed between Batista and the *Auténticos,* led by Grau, within the initial anti-Machado forces. Both sought support from the newly created CTC. The Communists in the CTC preferred a Batista alliance. The *Auténticos* sought to oust the Communists from the CTC for, once rid of Communist pro-Batista leaders, the CTC would then consent to cooperation with the *Auténticos.*

Competition for control continued after Grau became President in 1944, although the anti-Communist, pro-*Auténtico* faction was weakened by the Communist Party's participation in the Grau governing coalition. This persisted until 1947, when Grau encouraged a split in the Confederation of Cuban Workers between Communist and non-Communist members. Each elected national committees. The anti-Communist committee was then recognized as the solo CTC committee, leaving the Communist group without legal standing. Grau subsequently broke with the Communist Party, causing it to leave the government coalition. Today anti-Communist union membership is greater than that of the rival Communist unions. The future growth and prestige of the anti-Communist unions will be greatly affected by the degree of popular support accorded the *Auténtico* Party in the 1948 elections.

b. Popular Socialist Party.

Legalized as a political party by 1939 under Batista, the Cuban Communist Party (the Popular Socialist Party) was accorded cabinet representation in 1943. Subsequent to Grau's election it retained influence by making a political alliance with the *Auténticos,* thus escaping the consequences of having supported the losing Presidential candidate.

In the registration for the forthcoming (1 June 1948) elections, PSP registered 158,755, the smallest of any of the six Cuban national parties. In the election itself the PSP can be expected to poll nearer 200,000 votes. The importance of its vote, however, will not be derived from the number cast but for whom they are cast and the relative strength of the party of the winning Presidential candidate in the next Cuban Congress. A Communist candidate running alone will have no chance of election. The PSP is thus now striving for a bargain with a non-Communist candidate by which the Communists may obtain postelection influence in exchange for support of the non-Communist candidate at the polls. The degree of adherence by a non-Communist President to any such pre-election bargain with the Communists will depend upon the need for the Communist congressional vote in order to maintain a working majority.

2. NON-COMMUNIST STRENGTH.

Non-Communist strength in Cuba is derived from a substantial majority of the 514,831 unaffiliated registered voters in combination with the adherents of the five non-Communist political parties whose registered strength is as follows:

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Cuban Revolutionary Party *(Auténticos)*	793,115
Liberal	358,991
Republicans	284,914
Democrats	193,700
Cuban People's Party	165,269

a. Cuban Revolutionary Party.

The Cuban Revolutionary Party *(Auténticos)* emerged from the struggle against Machado in 1933 as a loosely knit force that included not only students who had spearheaded the revolution but also workers opposed to Machado. After the original primary period of reaction against the Machado dictatorship its political program crystallized into a complex of aspirations referred to as *Cubanidad*, still the strongest and most durable influence in Cuban political life. *Cubanidad* may be summarized as ultranationalism (especially in economic affairs), greater opportunities for the peasants and workers, and improvement in the economic and political status of the masses in combination with advocacy of equal rights for negroes.

Although President Grau San Martin has been both a symbol of *Auténtico* strength and policy, failure to formulate a schematic arrangement of party policy has permitted sharp divergencies to develop within *Auténtico* ranks. This has been encouraged by Grau's personal predilection for remote and philosophical attitudes. Party discipline, consequently, has been unable to cope with the original anarchist-terroristic elements within the party which, by now, have damaged the party's prestige and authority with bombs, assassinations, and organized extortion.

A party coterie, known as the BAGA, has evolved from the alliance of Pauline (Grau's sister-in-law who lives in the palace with him), her son, her favorite, and her cousin by marriage, and has developed into a real political force that now seeks vigorously to capture for one of its adherents the *Auténtico* nomination for the Presidency.

An open deserter from *Auténtico* ranks has been Senator Eddy Chibás, who led his following out of the party in 1947 forming a new party, the Cuban People's Party.

Regardless of defections and divergencies, however, the *Auténticos*, as the party in power and as the heir of the traditions of the anti-Machado revolution, remain the largest single party in Cuba. Its Presidential candidate supported by the Republican Party cannot be defeated at the polls except by a united effort of all major opposition parties plus a large proportion of the independent voters.

b. Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party, the oldest and second largest party in Cuba, has never recovered from former Machado associations. Furthermore, its traditional, conservative, and retrospective outlook, its lack of a popular program, and inability to attract young people has caused a progressive loss of adherents despite excellent precinct and provincial organization. Only by participation in a successful coalition against the *Auténticos* can it hope to derive power from the forthcoming 1 June elections.

c. Republican Party.

The Republican Party is a conservative, nonrevolutionary party that separated from the Democratic Party in 1944 to support Grau's candidacy. The Republi-

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cans resented Batista's continued influence and the coalition with the Communist Party that he had perfected. But the postelection *Auténtico* agreement with the Communists and the unheeded contention of the Republican leader, Alonso Pujol, that the *Auténticos* should name a Republican candidate in 1948 in reward for 1944 support, has driven the Republicans to serious conversations with the Liberals and Democrats with a view to forming an anti-*Auténtico* alliance. The final outcome of such conversations will partially depend on whom the *Auténticos* nominate. Meanwhile, *Auténticos'* choice of a candidate will possibly be influenced by the realization that the existing *Auténtico*-Republican alliance is essential if the opposition parties unite.

d. Democratic Party.

The Democratic Party is intimately identified with its principal leader — conservative, young, and vigorous Raul Menocal, ex-mayor of Havana. Menocal actively champions united opposition to the *Auténticos*. Although already the Democratic nominee for President, he has stated his willingness to step aside in order to form a strong anti-*Auténtico* coalition.

e. Cuban People's Party.

The Cuban People's Party *(Ortodoxos)*, a recent product of the alliance of the former ABC Party and the followers of Eddy Chibás, has already developed a split that threatens its future.

The ABC Party originally included many middle- and upper-class young men of ability and talent who organized in a cellular pattern against the Machado despotism. Although very effective as revolutionaries and publicists, the ABC failed to develop electoral strength and won cabinet representation only by successive opportune political alliances. Rather than face gradual but inevitable disappearance as a political party, ABC joined with the colorful radio commentator and senator, Eddy Chibás, notwithstanding a wide disparity in basic views. For while the ABC today is comprised largely of experienced political opportunists, Chibás continues to broadcast his doctrine that no pact should be made with the "evil" opposition parties and that devotion to the "orthodox" principles of the 1933 revolution constitutes the proper function of the new party. Observance of these principles, according to Chibás, would abolish graft, black markets, monopolies, and exploitation by foreigners. To Chibás, the Communists are a perversion; to the ABC they are a bloc of votes capable of possible political utility. The intellectual gulf is too great to permit real cohesion. Schism appears imminent, in which some former followers of Chibás and the ABC will probably promote an anti-*Auténtico* coalition and Chibás will endeavor to hold his partisans together as a small independent party or drift back to the *Auténticos* at a favorable juncture.

f. Unaffiliated Voters.

The unaffiliated voters are an invisible party of more than a half million who did not indicate preferences in the registration and who are a possible deciding element in the forthcoming elections. The vote of this group, uncommitted as yet, will probably be divided among the existing parties in proportion to the effectiveness of the election-time appeals of respective candidates and their political alignments.

3. FACTORS AFFECTING ELECTIONS.

Factors now affecting the 1 June elections are: (a) the *Auténticos'* choice of a

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candidate; (b) the possibility of an anti-*Auténtico* coalition; (c) adherence of the Republicans to their present *Auténtico* alliance; (d) position of the Communists in political realignments; (e) possibility of an *Auténtico* split with one of the two factions lining up with the Communists; and (f) trend of the unaffiliated vote.

Principal present contenders for the *Auténtico* nomination are: Suárez Fernández, Prio Socarrás, and José de San Martin, a possible compromise candidate, known to be favored by President Grau. Suárez Fernández' nomination might insure Communist support. Prio, the leader of Grau's anti-Communist campaign within the CTC, could not gain this support. On the other hand, his anti-Communist record would have a distinct appeal to Chibás. José de San Martin, is not openly identified as either pro or anti-Communist, although the BAGA, whose support he would need for nomination, is anti-Communist. If Suárez Fernández were nominated, and elected with Communist support, the principal unfavorable effect on US interests would be the re-establishment of Communist strength within the Cuban Government. If either of the other two candidates succeeds in being elected, without Communist support, the possible increase in *"Cubanidad"* nationalism might be harmful to US interests.

The Liberals, Democrats, Republicans, and opportunists in the People's Party have discussed an anti-*Auténtico* coalition but there is Republican reluctance to joining such a coalition and the other three groups remain unconvinced that Republican adherence is indispensable to victory.

The Republicans, who recall the disaster of the anti-*Auténtico* coalition in the last Havana mayoralty election, will be reluctant again to join such a coalition unless assured of victory; the more so since they would have nothing to gain save additional patronage and spoils, rather than power. In the case of success in the elections by an anti-*Auténtico* coalition formed of a number of parties, not including the Communist, actual operations of the resulting government would depend on the personnel in important posts and the extent of cooperation obtained from the different parties. The outstanding possibility as the coalition's candidate is Nuñez Portuondo, of the Liberal Party, an old-line political leader whose election would not be detrimental to US interests. Republican adherence to the coalition would appear to be necessary to success.

Because an alliance with the Communists would now hurt any existing single party more than it would help, the Communists are likely to remain isolated. There is at present a possibility, however, that the *Auténticos,* unable to agree on a single candidate of their own, will split into two opposing factions, one of which will ally itself with the Communists. But if the *Auténticos* remain united, the isolation of the Communists should continue unless it becomes clear either to a united anti-*Auténtico* coalition, or to its opponents, that Communist votes could decide the election. Even then, loss of the unaffiliated votes might outweigh the gain.

Prediction of the trend of the unaffiliated vote is at present impossible. Were it to be distributed proportionately among individual parties or coalitions, it will have no significant effect. But since few Cubans remain indifferent to politics, sudden and unexpected events of the moment could have an immediate effect on the unaffiliated vote and make it a determining factor.

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ENCLOSURE "A"

DISSENT OF THE INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

It is believed that the somewhat alarming tone of the summary is not justified by the main text of the report nor by the known facts of the Cuban situation.

Although there is developing nationalism and a growing spirit of independence in Cuba which is tending in the long run to make it more difficult for the United States to deal with Cuba with regard to the interests of the United States in that country, there appears to be little if anything in the present political situation which indicates that the election of June 1948 will be critical as far as US security interests are concerned. It does not seem likely that the victorious party or coalition will be any less cooperative than the present administration. The Communists have been eliminated in the past year from the coalition supporting the present administration, and although it is possible that the Communists might be included in a coalition in the forthcoming election, they are unlikely to have more influence than they have had until recently in the Grau Administration. In any case, it appears that the strength of the Communists in Cuba is declining slightly rather than increasing. It seems unlikely that the nationalistic Autenticos will be, if elected, substantially more nationalistic than they have been for the past four years.

Of course any election in a foreign country in which the United States has such important interests as it has in Cuba will affect in some manner the relations between the countries. If the more conservative, anti-administration forces should be successful in the June election, it is altogether possible that the United States would find it easier to obtain concessions or negotiate agreements with the Cuban Government.

Summation of the facts does not appear to justify statement that United States security interests are in jeopardy in the coming election.

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